

60 YEARS ALREADY!

It's celebration time for Opus Dei women in Canada! This second article in a series of five reveals the cause of their joy, 60 years after their arrival in this country. Here's a glance at the work being done with young people.

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FROM CAMP TO CLUB: AN ADVENTURE IN FRIENDSHIP!

" I just can't wait! "... With sparkling eyes and a smile on her lips, Jasmine

dreams of again meeting the friends with whom she had so much fun last summer. "It feels good to spend time with girls who share your ideas and values," says the 13-year-old.

Since 1965, from one end of Canada to the other, from Quebec to Vancouver, to Ontario and Alberta, thousands of girls have had the joy of participating in camps and clubs created by the women of Opus Dei, taken there by their enthusiastic moms. They have discovered true and lasting friendships based on respect, good manners, the spirit of service, order, attention to others, and so on. Here human and Christian values have pride of place.

The beginnings

It all started at the Manoir de Beaujeu, in Valleyfield, where, for the first time, the laughter of young participants aged 9 to 14 echoed on the shores of the St. Lawrence.

Whether it is through singing around a campfire, walking, cooking, rowing, swimming, doing arts and crafts, theater, or picking strawberries and blueberries, the girls gradually discovered God hidden in each and every thing there with them in the simplicity of everyday life. Just as He is there with them at Mass!

Today, as well, the instructors offer the girls reflections on human virtues and the challenges they face in present day society. A priest is available for the Eucharist, confession and spiritual guidance. One of the first campers, Isabelle Saint-Maurice, now a numerary (celibate layperson), says: "I am a child of the Quiet Revolution. I have always gone against the tide. Finding my family values at camp, in the clubs and with youth of my age gave me great strength; it helped me defend my beliefs in high school,

CEGEP and university, deepening my faith all the while."

Camps and clubs

Another great asset, the unconditional welcome and camaraderie experienced at the camps and in the clubs (during the school year) contributes to building self-confidence. Each girl is free to be herself and to make friends without wearing a mask, remaining natural. "Here, I felt as important as at home with my family," recalls Francine Frigon, supernumerary (married layperson) and mother of seven, who attended camps and clubs in the 70s. She also lived the great experience of the UNIV in 1974: spending Holy Week and celebrating Easter in Rome, while having the privilege of meeting with the Father who, at that time, was none other than Saint Josemaria.

"In all these activities," she adds, "I discovered women who had a real desire to know me, to understand me, to help me. All this appealed to me a lot and gave me the desire to experience the same happiness they radiated. I gradually understood that the joy, the mutual support, the respect, the gift of oneself to others, the simplicity of their lives all came from the same source: their faith. Even during a brief period of spiritual cooling off (17-20 years old), I knew this experience was a treasure for my life. I wanted to live with that spirit for my whole life, to choose a simple, optimistic and positive path."

A simple, optimistic, positive path

For Marie-Josée, a mother of four and a university professor, participating in these cultural and spiritual activities was also a gift: "We were well supervised by

outstanding adults who encouraged us to develop our talents and share them. We would also have exciting conversations about the significant topics of the day. As a result, very simply, my religious practice has become a very natural part of my life (mass, confession, prayer). " Always a great friend of Opus Dei, Marie-Josée encourages her daughters to participate in the activities offered: "These have all helped us and united us as a family. We're all on the same wavelength!"

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